

## "As a Thief in the Night"

By JANE OSBORN

Janet started slightly as the gate-clicked behind her. She was half way up the clean brick walk—she could be following so close behind? Turning square about she saw a man, tall and thinish, stooping a little from the weight of things swung over his shoulders, who halted as she faced him, asking uncertainly: "Are you Mrs. Dancy? And did you get my letter?"

"I am not—I did not," Janet answered imperatively. "My name is Ross, but I live here with Mrs. Dancy. No letter has come from anybody within the last three days. I know, because I take the mail from the box."

The man gasped faintly. He was breathing hard, as though spent. "I might have guessed as much," he said. "There was nobody to meet me, but I blundered on; tell me, please, what I had better do."

"Sit down first—anything else depends," Janet answered wearily. She had burdens enough already without taking on those of a stranger. She noted amid the heterogeneous burden he thankfully dropped a folding easel, a sketchbook and sundry odd-shaped parcels, in addition to a fine leather bag, much scuffed and plastered half over with varicolored labels. He slumped palpably on the bench placed in the curve of the path where the crumpled myrtle shaded it. Before she could settle what to say he went on: "I was advised to come here—climate quiet and that sort of thing, you know. I'm not exactly a tramp, but when you're just out after six weeks in hospital you're pretty much all in."

"Naturally," Janet commented. "You would like to stay here a while?"

"As long as my money will let me," the newcomer broke in. "My name is London—not that it matters—I sketch and draw things, for illustrations, you know. Jimmy Burton sent me here; he is kin to Mrs. Dancy."

"I know," Janet in turn interrupted. "That being the case, I am sure you can stay. At least until you are better again. She is very hospitable. Sit here. I will send her to you; you can set things straighter quicker face to face."

By such means fate set Joseph London down in the softly scented summer foothills, where every day had its own charm miraculously unlike all other days. The sun was the miracle of the season, helped by clouds and winds of the most perfect the weather-foreknew their treachery. Pine came in hot gusts from the mountain, ever looming and ever changing. And all about was the pulsing life of the country—uninhabited fully but nowhere dead. An oasis of contentment it seemed to London—he was so wearied of strange tongues, strange cities, the mad clash of changing human lives. Here there was neither poverty nor riches. Rather a spare yet thrifty

plenty, exhaling the wholesome perfume of rest, after labor and joy in morning light.

Mrs. Dancy, plump, silver-haired, motherly, had taken him almost literally to her heart. He believed magically under her cherishing, accepting it so gratefully he could not wonder how Janet Ross managed to hold it aloof. A queer girl, he decided; not handsome nor brilliant, yet with potentialities. At first he had set her down as machine-made—the type ground out in myriads by the mill of school and college. But presently he had surprised something of reality, that showed him depths almost tragic, heights that might be dangerously alluring. But these discoveries neither explained nor justified her civilly repressed antagonism to the older woman. He gathered casually that she had grown up in the house; she was evidently free of it, yet he had somehow a sense that her position was something anomalous. When the rare visitors came she almost immediately vanished, making never an excuse. But that was less surprising than her solitary vigils; she occupied the secluded east wing, whose windows were always lighted long after midnight.

Back to working strength, London ceased to speculate about her. He was still the fair-haired boy of his kind, but she thought nothing of a world that added to his comfort. Her low-winged carriage and easy-going ponies took him far and wide, up hill and down dale, seeking out beauty spots and trying to preserve some of their charm. Commonly those, the black house boy, drove, loitering afterward to wait upon the painter, serving sometimes as model, oftener as messenger or man of all work. London was mightily tempted to gossip with the lad, but held his curiosity in check—it would be dastardly to pry into things the woman who was so kind evidently cared to keep hidden.

So summer slipped by until a sultry late-August morning of lowering mists and growling thunder. Mrs. Dancy roused him saying, hushedly, her face ashen: "Wake up! You—you must take Janet—she won't go with me—and she must not go alone—falling there into choking silence. In a daze London obeyed. Presently he was driving through the stormy dawn furiously, toward the station. Janet crouched beside him, her eyes burning in a stony face. A rifle from the house she broke out. "You ought not to be here. Go back. Nobody should go with me on such an errand."

"Let me judge for both of us," London answered. "I do not ask what it is—only know there is great need."

"But you must know," Janet said; "I go, God be thanked, to see my mother die. She had a life sentence for murder. Now will you go back?"

"Not if an army tried to stop me," London said, looking away from her. "She—she killed my father—when I was six weeks old. She was not his wife. You know his wife—the excellently comely Mrs. Dancy."

"And Mrs. Dancy knew everything. She was rich and ready in love, and wanted to lavish her money on me—but never mind. I hate her less for that than for taking me for her own. I would have been so much kinder, so much better, to let me starve. My mother's people had cast her off utterly—they did not lift a finger to help. Mrs. Dancy paid the lawyers to save my mother's life—that was her last revenge—she knew death would

## WITH THE FUNNY MEN



Beat Him a Mile.

"That tenor of ours can hold one of his notes for nearly two minutes." "That's nothing. I've held a note for nearly two years, that one of yours."

Movie Standby.

"What is this drama about?" "The great Northwest. Shall we go in?"

"No. I know that plot thoroughly now."

Adds to His Revenge.

She—Father's remarks about you were very bitter.

He—I'm glad they were, because I'm going to make him eat his words.

## THE SOCIAL LIFE



"Jane says she has always moved in the best society." "Yes, as fast as she gets in they keep her moving."

## THE FUNNY HUMP



Dollie—In the park, Uncle John, I saw a baby with a hump on its back—it was so funny.

Uncle John—But you mustn't laugh at affliction, my dear.

Dollie—Oh, it was the camel's baby, Uncle John!

A Martyr.

"What's become of Rantington Roarer, the eminent tragedian?"

"He's playing small parts in the movies."

"He used to say he'd starve before he'd prostitute his talents on the screen."

"Maybe he did. He was considerably underweight when he signed up."

Improving.

"You had a narrow escape from that motorcar, my friend."

"I did, indeed," replied the pedestrian as he took a tape measure out of his pocket.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to measure the distance I jumped. I believe I exceeded my previous record fully two feet."



A GOOD AUTHORITY

"Jack may escape after all. The young widow says he is clever but impossible."

"If the young widow has found him impossible he must be clever."

A Modern Romance.

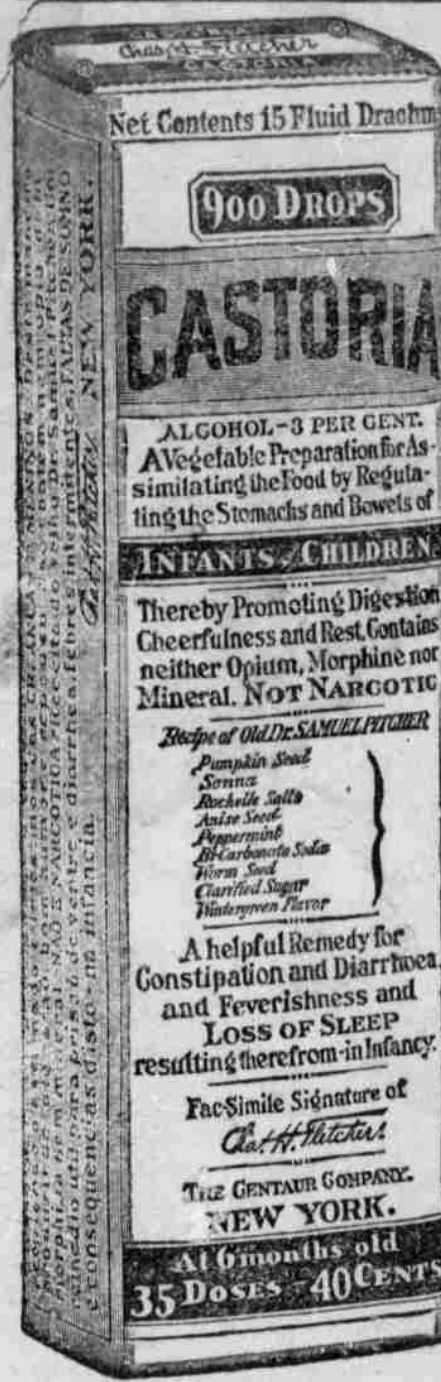
They went to school together. They grew up side by side. But he never knew he loved her till her rich uncle died.

Time to Economize.

"A thousand dollar loan will put me on my feet," said the citizen in distress.

"Get on your feet first and I'll talk to you," replied the banker.

"What?" "You have a brand new sport car parked out in front."



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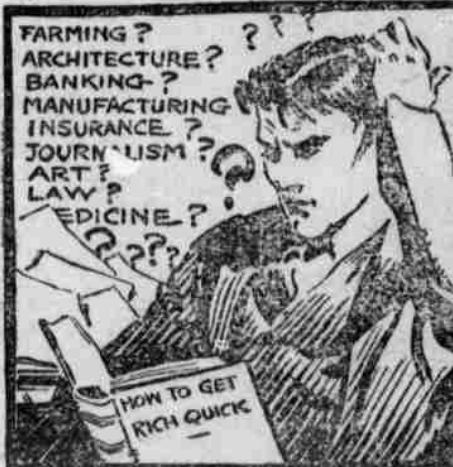
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## LADY GOT SO WEAK COULD SCARCELY STAND

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"SOME TIME AGO," says Mrs. Buena McFarland, of R. F. D. 2, Bostic, N. C., "I suffered a great deal with weakness common to women."

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"I was very nervous, and could not rest. I didn't feel like eating. I grew thin, and did not have ambition for anything."

"I had been trying other remedies . . . but I did not get any better."

"Some one told us of Cardui, and what I was recommended for. I also

took a Ladies Birthday Almanac and read of a case something like mine. I told my husband to get it and I would try it."

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